

Minutes for CPC Meeting of 1/26/06, 7:30 pm–10:30 pm, Town Hall, Faulkner Room

Attending:

Jon Benson, Peter Berry, Tory Beyer (8 pm), Catherine Coleman, Walter Foster, Matt Lundberg, Andy Magee, Susan Mitchell-Hardt, Ken Sghia-Hughes, Ed Starzec, Nancy Tavernier, Roland Bartl, Kristin Alexander

Audience:

Steve Noone, Anne Forbes

Susan acted as Secretary pro tem until Ken arrived at 7:40 pm.

FUND STATUS AND PROJECT COMPLETION REVIEW

Roland handed out a spreadsheet showing CPA Project Accounts Status (as of 1/23/06). The only item with an unencumbered fund balance remaining after project completion (as per Iron Work Farm testimony before CPC) is the Jones Tavern chimney repair.

The CPC voted unanimously to authorize the Town Accountant to close out the Jones Tavern chimney account (account 0096#17D-4/05) and return the remaining \$3,800 to the general CPA fund balance and make it available for new appropriation.

(The Davis Monument Restoration project is complete except for landscape work around the base.).

(Ken arrived and took over as Secretary).

Approval of Minutes

The Committee unanimously approved the minutes for the 12/15/05 meeting as amended.
The Committee unanimously approved the minutes for the 1/5/06 meeting as amended.
The Committee unanimously approved the minutes for the 1/12/06 meeting as amended.

Discussion of “Judgment Call” Proposals

The Committee discussed the question raised by the Town Counsel’s opinion that some proposals require a judgment as to whether they are allowed by the CPA for funding. Jon noted that the key issue is that the CPA allows funding for the purchase of land for recreation or the creation of new recreational areas. The proposals in question are:

1. School Street ball fields
2. Gates Playground
3. Douglas Basketball court
4. Arboretum paths

The discussion generated the following comments from Committee members:

- We need to establish a policy and consistently apply it.
- Douglas (Elm Street) Basketball Court and the Arboretum have a community aspect, whereas the Gates project is really only for the school. It doesn't have the community aspect.
- Leary Field created new community fields.
- We need a policy. Applicants have complained about our not having one. It seems too case-specific.
- We need to educate the Town about our justifications and reasons we accept or reject a proposal (Leary Field is a good example of that).
- Maybe we should revise the goals in the CPC Plan to include the community aspect.
- We need to be able to respond at Town Meeting to accusations of ineligibility of projects.
- Concord recently asked the Department of Revenue (DOR) for an opinion on the eligibility of a playground project and receive "Not Eligible" as the answer.
- Town Counsel said it is a judgment call, i.e. that it is up to us to decide. Let's make a judgment and move on.
- Creation of recreation depends on new usage in the community.

Brainstorming session (Attachment)

The Committee held a general "brainstorming" session to air thoughts, opinions, and concerns about each proposal before the Committee. Roland and Kristin recorded the brainstorming notes (typed up separately).

New Business

A motion was made to send a letter to the Library Trustees in support of allowing the Fitzgerald piano to be housed in the Memorial Library upon restoration. The motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the meeting schedule for February, and agreed to hold meetings on the regularly scheduled evenings of 2/9/06 and 2/23/06.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ken Sghia-Hughes, Clerk
Community Preservation Committee

Attachment
Community Preservation Committee
“Brainstorming” Session
January 26, 2006

1. 28 Willow Street & 214 Central Street

- Community/Neighborhood support
- Well-planned
- Fills in semi-blighted parcel in Village—Smart Growth
- Confident they will make up additional funds
- AHA is thinking about purchasing a unit with CPA funds too
- Leverages money
- A step to the affordable housing goal
- Good design
- Brown-field re-use
- 100% affordable housing (the goal)

2. McCarthy Village Recreational Area

- Difficult because of cost, but we’re committed
- Would like to scale back (e.g. the volleyball court)
- Urgent need
- Need to consider the ability and expertise of the applicant to get the project done. In this case, the applicant can
- Could just have a field rather than a volleyball court
- Support for low-income housing
- Do not come back again!
- Has a professional engineer’s cost estimate this time
- How will Town Meeting react?

3. Housing Support—Planning and Feasibility Study

- Should come in with a flushed out project, not a “see if we can do a project” study
- Is it a tangible project? Unsure.
- CPA could give them money if they’re having problems with their operating budget
- Have a problem with a study—would rather see a project
- Proposal is to hire a consultant
- They have to be careful how they write the specifications
- Vague scope and product
- Town Counsel’s comments helped to define the project
- Public housing/regulation is a complicated problem—they need professional guidance
- It is an effort to find a way to respond to regulation changes
- The project will identify money to be leveraged

- The effort is to lay out a road map
- The project needs precise specifications for the consultant
- There is no other leveraging money for the Housing Authority?
- This is part of the funding patchwork to create AHA units
- Would rather the applicant come in with a feasibility study and have the CPC fund the project
- Frustration—we have no new AHA units with CPA funds yet. This proposal is a step towards that
- Might help toward the 10% affordable housing goal (a little)

4. Open Space Set-Aside Funds

- Add more money?

5. Douglas School—Outdoor Basketball Courts

- Does the creation of the courts open it up to new usage?
- Would serve youth and adult leagues
- Don't like the piecemeal approach to the project(s) in the area
- Applicants have been pro-active, but just want to get it done (so they are not waiting for the other projects)
- Needs more vetting
- May be better in a different location
- The dollar request is reasonable
- School has the ability to carry out the project
- No lights—may be better?
- Should look at the entire area more holistically, e.g. lighting integration
- The Town should have a “Recreation Master Plan” for the entire Town
- No Inter-Municipal Agreement is in place
- Appears to serve new programs not yet in existence
- Not well integrated with surrounding facilities
- Well leveraged
- Prefer the 1/3-1/3-1/3 funding approach
- What is the community impact?

6. The Woodland Path to Leary Field

- Is path integral to the Leary Field project? If so, are there other funds?
- Bill Mullin says the Friends of Leary Field are out of money (but by choice)
- Budget could come down (\$5000 or so)
- Bill Mullin said they would never be back for this
- Two handicapped parking spaces would be placed at the beginning of the path
- The project would be allowing access to a recreation area created by CPA funds
- Are there other money sources? No?

- This would supplement Leary Field
- Is this part of the original scope? Yes or no?
- Appears to have the neighbors' agreement/consent
- Uses additional existing parking lot for Leary Field—Smart Growth
- Has good landscaping plan elements
- It enhances community use in a safe way (provides safe access)
- Maintenance questions?
- Possible trash
- Are event sponsors able to pay for clean-up of the high school and junior high facilities after an event?

7. Gates School Playground

- The idea of tearing down something that looks okay is upsetting. Is there a treatment they can use to rehabilitate the structure?
- Is there a code compliance issue? Only if replacing the structure.
- There are playground structures next to the one in the project that are not being replaced (the ship). They're bigger, larger and new
- The Recreation Committee playground study is coming up, so maybe we should wait for this
- The structure is in good condition (except for the splinters)
- Prefer the 1/3-1/3-1/3 funding model

8. Habitat Home

- The River Street site next to the 40B development is within walking distance of South Acton Village and the train station—Great site
- The other potential site—Cross Street in North Acton—may have wetlands issues
- Would/should the CPC grant this money without a site?
- Site is still an open question—unsure
- The River Street site is Town-owned
- Town Meeting would have to dispose of River Street site for low money
- More solid now than last year
- Stronger organization this year than last

9. Roof and Gutter Replacement—Jones Tavern

- Perfect application for CPC funds

10. Restoration of Historic Stone Chamber

- If you knock it down, you have to fix it
- A lot of support in the community
- It's an amateur organization doing it
- Native American culture

- A tourist attraction
- It has the perception of being a “hole in the ground”
- Project has a lot of “ifs”
- Safety of chamber is an issue if the project is not funded
- The chamber is not well known
- The project has a constituency
- There is a 3rd alternative to knocking it down or repairing it—filling it with dirt to preserve it as is for future excavation

11. Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)

- There is going to be a stronger push from the Town now to get a design done
- Great support for this project in the community
- When will it happen?
- If the project is ready to go, is the funding enough?
- The Board of Selectmen is now resolved to move on it

12. Fitzgerald Piano Preservation

- The CPC should maybe push the Library Trustees to open it up during library hours and in a prominent place
- It’s historic
- Can use it for live entertainment
- The budget amount seems solid
- There will be money put aside for maintenance (not from CPC funding)
- The applicant is qualified to complete the project
- The piano needs a place in the Library
- The piano would be played during Sunday hours
- The CPC passed a motion to send a letter to the Library Trustees to encourage placement of the piano in the Memorial Library

13. School Street Recreational Twin Ball Fields

- Extension option is the Town’s
- Fence is out of the project? They may come back next year for this or raise more private funds
- The legal issues with the State to be resolved
- The funding request is probably coming down
- Brand new recreation space
- Fields would be used by every age group
- Fields would serve a need in the community

14. Town Hall Slate Roof Replacement

- “No brainer”?!

- Contract is locked in

15. Universal Access—Acton Arboretum

- Reduced the funding request
- Project includes a new path
- Project is nicely leveraged
- Applicant might come back another year, but that's okay